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SENATE BILL 5950

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State of Washington

56th Legislature

1999 Regular Session

By Senators Fairley, Fraser, Thibaudeau, Kohl-Welles and Prentice

Read first time 02/17/1999. Referred to Committee on Health & Long-Term Care.

1 AN ACT Relating to early hearing loss detection, diagnosis, and  
2 intervention; creating new sections; making appropriations; and  
3 declaring an emergency.

4 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

5 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** The legislature finds that the period  
6 between birth and two to three years of age is the most valuable time  
7 for language development. If hearing impaired children are not  
8 identified early, it is difficult, if not impossible, for many of them  
9 to acquire the fundamental language, social, and cognitive skills that  
10 provide the foundation for later schooling and success in society. The  
11 legislature further finds that it has been estimated that over four  
12 hundred children will be born in Washington state with significant  
13 hearing loss. The average age at which children with hearing loss are  
14 first identified and begin intervention in Washington is eighteen  
15 months and is higher in rural areas. Only twenty-five percent of  
16 children with hearing loss in Washington are identified and are  
17 receiving services by three years of age. Unfortunately, this  
18 situation is made additionally difficult because we find that only  
19 children and families living in metropolitan areas have access to a

1 wide range of services, including a variety of early intervention  
2 options. The legislature further finds that local communities want to  
3 improve their early detection, diagnosis, and intervention services for  
4 children with hearing loss and their families, but need technical  
5 assistance and guidance.

6 It is the intent of this act to promote the development of a pilot  
7 early hearing loss detection, diagnosis, and intervention system linked  
8 to community resources.

9 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** The department of health shall establish ten  
10 early hearing loss detection, diagnosis, and intervention pilot  
11 programs linked to community resources throughout Washington, including  
12 metropolitan and rural areas. The department of health early hearing  
13 loss detection, diagnosis, and intervention pilot programs shall ensure  
14 the following:

15 (1) All newborn infants shall be screened for hearing loss by three  
16 months of age in the area identified as the pilot program catchment  
17 area by the department of health;

18 (2) Screening should occur prior to hospital discharge at the time  
19 of birth, with coordination to screen home births;

20 (3) All infants who fail the screen shall be diagnosed for hearing  
21 loss by six months of age; and

22 (4) That appropriate intervention is provided to all infants who  
23 are diagnosed with significant hearing loss.

24 The department of health may receive gifts, grants, or endowments  
25 from public or private sources that are made from time to time, in  
26 trust or otherwise, for the use and benefit of the purposes of the  
27 pilot programs created in this section and spend gifts, grants, or  
28 endowments or income from the public or private sources according to  
29 their terms, unless the receipt of the gifts, grants, or endowments  
30 violates RCW 42.17.710.

31 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** The department of health shall establish a  
32 state-wide advisory committee of consumers, and medical, audiology, and  
33 educational professionals to provide guidance and assistance in the  
34 design, development, and implementation of the pilot program created in  
35 section 2 of this act. The department of health in coordination with  
36 the advisory board shall: (1) Develop a strategy to identify best  
37 practices standards for the pilot program; (2) develop an educational

1 component to inform the appropriate professional medical communities of  
2 the value of the pilot program; and (3) implement a system to evaluate  
3 the outcome of the pilot program based on performance standards.

4 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 4.** The department of health shall report to the  
5 appropriate committees of the legislature on the progress of the pilot  
6 program created in section 2 of this act by January 1, 2000, and  
7 provide a final report by December 12, 2001.

8 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 5.** (1) The sum of four hundred ninety thousand  
9 dollars, or as much thereof as may be necessary, is appropriated for  
10 the fiscal year ending June 30, 1999, from the general fund to the  
11 department of health for the purposes of this act.

12 (2) The sum of two hundred sixty thousand dollars, or as much  
13 thereof as may be necessary, is appropriated for the fiscal year ending  
14 June 30, 2000, from the general fund to the department of health for  
15 the purposes of this act.

16 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 6.** This act is necessary for the immediate  
17 preservation of the public peace, health, or safety, or support of the  
18 state government and its existing public institutions, and takes effect  
19 immediately.

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